

Caregiver Connection

September 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

Preventing behavior problems

From the Families Together Newsletter

These suggestions are not rocket science, but are helpful reminders of things we can do to help our child's... and our day... go better!



PREPARE FOR TRANSITIONS. From preschoolers to teenagers, all children have difficulty transitioning from one activity to another. Be prepared to help your children transition. Teach them how to bring closure to one activity and how to begin another. This may slow you down, but it will reduce tantrums and other behavior problems.

PREPARE FOR BIOLOGICAL CLOCKS. When we are hungry or tired we are less patient. Difficult children will become impossible when they are tired or hungry. Activities that take place right before a meal or right before bed should be simple and routine. Does that mean you should never allow children to play up to the last minute before dinner, or to push their energy level to enjoy an activity in the evening? No, just be prepared to help them out.

KNOW YOUR CHILD. If your child is very competitive and cannot handle losing a game, address this before the game starts or avoid competitive games. Use coaching and teaching to help your child develop the skills needed to deal with losing or failing. If your child has trouble controlling himself on trips, keep your outings short. To make your errands go easier, include an activity that your child perceives as fun.

KNOW YOUR CHILD'S TOLERANCE LEVEL. If your child becomes overwhelmed when routines are changed, give your child time to prepare and even choose whether or not to participate. Know when to leave an event - leave before your child is over stimulated or over tired.

PREPARE TO IGNORE THE "WHAT" AND REACT TO THE "WHY." If you know your child is simply attempting to get your attention and the method being used is disruptive, ignore what your child is doing and find another reason to pay attention to your child. Don't set yourself up for a confrontation that you can avoid. Always look for the "why." Hungry children need to be fed - then you can talk to them about their behavior. They need to recognize that they get cranky when they are hungry by watching for their signals you can help them learn how to recognize them too.

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This month's interview is not with a caregiver, but with one of the many amazing individuals who cared for our kids at Camp To Belong this year.

John Tilly is a big man, in many ways. Built like a football linebacker, he is big physically. In his nursing career he works to make a big difference to patients. And he made a big impression last month when he stood before a camp fire and movingly told 100 kids at Camp To Belong of his journey through foster care, adoption and into building his life.

At Camp To Belong Washington, his story is their story. "I think what I was hoping to convey was not what I had accomplished, but that I have gone through the same things they have," Tilly said in an interview. "I was a foster kid. I was adopted. I was separated from my siblings."

"Big John", his camp nickname, was a full participant in the many camp activities. The 38 year-old Port Orchard resident said you need to relate to the kids on their level. "You have to get down and get dirty with the kids," he laughed. "Often that's what kids want, a little time doing what they want to do, the way they want to do it – at their level."

It helps that campers know he has personally lived the same kind of life they are experiencing. Tilly also possesses a high "fun quotient". He can gently joke and tease with the kids and other counselors alike. On Rock 'n Roll Night,, "Big John" donned a blonde Marilyn Monroe-like wig, a leather jacket and white pants and participated in the theme-night dress-up fun.

His early life story would be familiar to those who work in child welfare. Born in Torrance, Calif., he never knew his biological father. His biological mother moved John and some of his siblings to Nebraska when he was three. Eventually, she took a job with a carnival, moving herself and the kids around the country. John told the campers about the night when at 7 years old, he and his 6 year old sister, wandered the streets of New York City alone while his mother worked.

Eventually, the family landed in Baltimore, Md., where his mother dropped the children off at a social service



agency and told them she was coming back. She never returned. They were moved back to Nebraska and placed in a handful of foster homes. John recalls one experience in 5th grade when the kids were to do a "me board" made with pictures of themselves, their families and early life. "There were all these posters decorated with all these pictures and for John, nothing," he said. But when he was almost 16, he and some of his siblings were adopted. His mom was a nurse; his dad was a Navy man.

From his early years, he wanted to be in a helping profession, but first he spent 10 years in the Navy. Eventually, he left the Navy and enrolled in nursing programs at Olympic College and later Seattle University. He met and married Jennifer, a chiropractor, and has a nine year old step son. His wife Jennifer got involved with Camp To Belong last year through her friendship with co-director April VanGesen, This year, April asked John if he would help as a nurse and counselor.

Counselors go through training before the kids arrive at camp. On that starlit Saturday night, John lay on the grass of Miracle Ranch and let the memories of those early years wash over him.

"I hadn't really put myself back into the foster care system since probably graduating from high school," he said. "It definitely formed me into the person I am today. It was a quiet, peaceful experience remembering all that. It really brought back all of those parts of my past- that I wasn't good enough, not loved – the feelings of inadequacy. And then how loving and supportive my adoptive parents were. Remembering when I was adopted and the feeling that someone loved me enough to make me a part of their family."

He called the camp experience "amazing" and said he will definitely do it next year. He called one of his sisters after camp to talk to her about it, to re-connect a bit and tell her how much he appreciated her and all they had been through. "That was a call I really felt I had to make," he said.

John has just been commissioned into the Navy reserve - as if to reinforce the Camp To Belong message "your past does not define you". You get to write the rest of your life story, no matter who has written the first part. "You can go places after foster care," he told them and that's a big message for all those campers to hear.

Performance-based contracting Coming soon to a service provider near you

By now, you have probably heard about HB 2106 and the mandate for the Children's Administration to transition to performance-based contracting (PBC). In the past several months, you may have been invited to informational presentations for caregivers around the state or visited one of the informational websites.

We expect the move to PBC will have minimal impact on caregivers, but if you are still wondering what this is all about, we recommend this website: www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/partners/transformCW.asp.

PBC will establish Master Contractors in each region. The Master Contractors will develop a network of subcontractors to ensure services are available for families. CA social workers, will no longer need to spend valuable time searching for a service provider to meet the needs of families and children on their case loads. Instead, they will refer a client needing services to the Master Contractor who will ensure services are assigned and provided through their network of subcontracted providers. This should improve your ability to access effective services for the children in your home.

If you still have questions, you may be interested in participating in a Webinar on September 15th at noon. You can register to be a part of that conversation by emailing Dinah.martin@dshs.wa.gov.

Another successful year for Camp to Belong

On the last night of Washington's Camp To Belong last month, one young camper stood up to tell what camp meant to her and how difficult it would be to separate from her brother the next day. Tears flowed, not words. She literally could not speak the emotion she felt. For the other 140 campers and counselors in the room, she did not have to. They were crying with her. "The right to reunite" is both the heart and motto of Camp To Belong, and it was captured movingly as her brother came to her and they hugged for many long seconds.

2010 was the second year Washington held its own Camp To Belong – one of nine in the United States and Australia to reunite siblings separated by foster care, adoption or other out of home living situations. The 97 separated siblings who attended at Miracle Ranch in Port Orchard this year brought to 260 the number of brothers and sisters aged 8-18 reunited at the five-day camp the past five years.

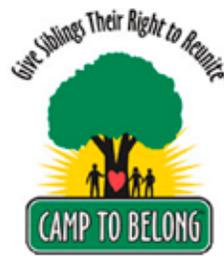
"I want to come and help for the rest of my life," said 18-year-old Andrew, who has attended camp both years with his brother. This year, Andrew was here as a counselor-in-training. Like other campers, he spent quality time with his brother, creating positive memories and building on what will likely be the longest life connection either of them will have. Like other campers, he could see that his story, his journey, was not unique. He told other campers that at camp they are not judged or labeled. Everyone's story is similar.

Camp To Belong was started in 1995 by Lynn Price, who didn't know she had a sister until she was eight years old. Vowing that experience should never happen to another child she began the camp experience.

Camp co-directors are foster moms Deb Kennedy and April Van Gesen. Both these ladies and their husbands have large families that include sibling groups they have adopted. Deb and April make camp a great experience including: Rock 'n Roll Night, with tie dyed shirts and other costumes; Birthday Party Night with cakes for each sibling group by Free Cakes For Kids; and Carnival/Rodeo Night. All campers leave with a Creative Memories book filled with pictures they took, individual professional portraits of each child and all their siblings, and a "sibling pillow" with written messages for their siblings to hold onto when they are not together.

Around the camp fire each night, campers and counselors share their experiences and hopes for the future. Each camper is left with the message that their past does not define their future. No matter who has written the first few chapters of their life, together with their brothers and sisters they can write the story of the rest of their lives.

On the shores of Horseshoe Lake, at the appropriately named Miracle Ranch, Andrew said it best: "Camp has been a life changing experience for me. Miracles happen here."



Post Adoption **Support**

Educational stability New federal legislation

New federal legislation requires that each family receiving adoption support for their school age child be required to provide the Adoption Support Program with information their child is attending school or is being home schooled consistent with the laws of the state where they live.

Washington's Adoption Support Program is seeking your input on how best to obtain this information from you. Please send your ideas in writing to:

Adoption Support Program
P. O. Box 45713
Olympia, WA. 98504-5713
Call 1-800-562-5682, or e-mail
lonnie.locke@dshs.wa.gov

Regional Contacts

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Pam Copeland 509-363-3379

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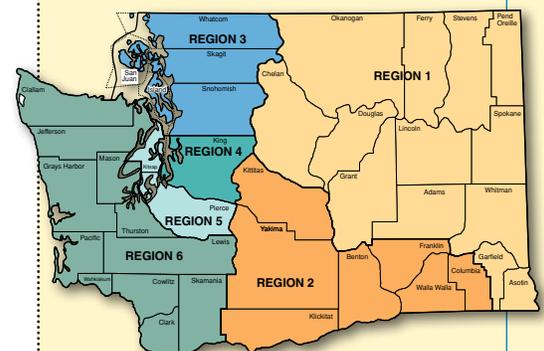
Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett 360-725-6758
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Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve <http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Back to school prep should start with immunizations

Protect your children from vaccine-preventable diseases

It's time for Washington's children to get ready for school. With outbreaks of whooping cough, flu, and chickenpox in our state in the last year, and a large measles outbreak just across the border in Canada, parents should make sure their kids are protected by being fully immunized.

Childhood vaccinations are among the most effective ways to protect children against serious, preventable illnesses — some of which have no cure or treatment. Parents should ensure their kids have all the immunizations they need to attend school. "Parents make many important decisions to keep their children healthy, and getting immunized is one of the most important," said State Health Officer and pediatrician Dr. Maxine Hayes. "Be sure your child's immunizations are up-to-date — it protects them, their classmates, families, and communities."

All recommended vaccines for children under 19 are provided at no-cost through the state's Childhood Vaccine Program. This includes vaccines required for school and child care, and vaccines that aren't required but are recommended for best protection, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) for pre-teens.

"Washington's Childhood Vaccine Program shows our state's commitment to preventing the spread of serious disease," said Dr. Hayes. "We've made it easy for parents to take advantage of the best way to protect their children and those in their community."

Several immunizations are required before children can attend school and child care. Students in kindergarten through ninth grade must be vaccinated against whooping cough. Kindergarteners, first, and second graders need two doses of the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine or must have a health care provider document that they've had the disease. Kids starting third, fourth, and sixth grades must get one dose of the chickenpox vaccine or their parents must document that they've had the disease.

Health care providers can use the CHILD Profile Immunization Registry to help parents complete the necessary paperwork by printing it directly from the registry. For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call your local health agency (www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm) or the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

Although exemptions are allowed for medical, religious, or personal reasons, the best disease protection is to make sure children have all recommended immunizations. Children who aren't fully immunized may be excluded from attending school, pre-school, or child care if a disease outbreak occurs. Unvaccinated children are more likely to get sick or spread disease.